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Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today offered an amendment that would expedite salvage logging and better prepare for forest fires and other unexpected catastrophic events. The amendment was offered to the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, H.R. 4200, during consideration of the bill by the House Committee on Resources. DeFazio predicted that in order for the bill to become law, changes will need to be made to the final version of the bill.

DeFazio's amendment helps ensure that our salvage policy is largely free of political meddling, and is based on peer-reviewed science and long term management goals, both of which are supported by expert testimony offered to the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health by OSU College of Forestry Dean Dr. Hal Salwasser.

"My main fear with this legislation, in its current form, is that it gives extraordinarily broad discretion to the Secretary," DeFazio said. "I appreciate that some may want this administration's political appointees to have this broad authority, but when Congress grants such broad discretion, they grant it to all administrations, including future administrations who may or may not use these extraordinary discretionary powers wisely."

"Congress has a duty to set policy, not pass the buck to political appointees. My alternative would greatly expedite procedures for post-catastrophic fire salvage, but require us to be prescriptive and apply different rules to different categories of forest. My proposal would de-politicize the issue, rely on peer-reviewed science, and still protect rights of appeal. As a policy-making body, Congress should set some parameters and provide some direction for the Forest Service and other land managers, not give a blank check to political appointees," DeFazio said.

DeFazio has participated in a number of hearings on salvage logging and post-fire recovery practices, including a recent field hearing in Medford, Oregon. The committee has heard testimony from a wide range of experts and activists on the issue, including several well-respected forest scientists such as Dr. Jerry Franklin, Dr. Dave Perry and Dr. Salwasser. After listening to the scientists, DeFazio determined that several key changes to H.R. 4200 were necessary.

DeFazio's amendment could provide a workable framework for a bill with a chance to become law. His amendment attempts to strike a balance between what is appropriate management

when timber production is the goal, and the more careful consideration that should take place when managing for wildlife, recreation, or other values. The DeFazio amendment would also provide for greater participation by the public, more certainty by pre-planning for events, and snag and downed tree standards that scientists say are essential.